

NSC BRIEFING

25X1 18 September 1958

SOVIET NUCLEAR TESTS (short form)

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- I. There has been mounting evidence of Soviet preparations for the imminent resumption of nuclear tests.

- A. A Moscow announcement that a large area including Novaya Zemlya would be closed to foreign ships and aircraft from 20 September to 25 October.

25X1

- II. In the political arena, Khrushchev on 30 August stated that continued US-UK testing "relieves the Soviet Union of the obligation (to cease tests) it had assumed unilaterally" last March. Despite this, Soviet spokesmen have so far refrained from any unequivocal announcement of a test resumption.

- A. However, Moscow Radio announced today that if Western tests continue, "the Soviet Union will also probably be forced, in the final analysis to resume its tests."

- III. A resumption prior to the 31 October opening of the scheduled Geneva talks on a test cessation agreement would indicate that Moscow believes the need to keep pace with recent American and British nuclear weapons progress outweighs the political disadvantages which renewed Soviet testing would entail.

USAF review(s) completed.

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NEW SOVIET BOMBER

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No Change in Class. ☐

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25X1

I. A large, new Soviet jet bomber was sighted on a factory airfield in Moscow on 27 August. The new aircraft was observed outside this plant which has been producing the BISON heavy jet bombers.

A. There have been indications during the past 12 months that a new aircraft might be under development at this plant.

1. BISON production has been erratic and dwindling. Increased activity--including night work--was noted in that portion of the plant which is believed to be the design bureau.

II. From a preliminary study of long-range photograph of the new aircraft--an artist's sketch of the photograph is displayed--it appears that the wing, not a true delta--has a sweep of about 45°. The wing span is less than half that of our B-52, although the fuselage is somewhat longer.

A. Four engines are visible--they are probably turbo jet. No estimate has been made on their thrust or size.

1. The aircraft has tandem bicycle landing gear and also outrigger gear. No tail turret is visible.

B. It is in the heavy bomber class.

III. Intensive studies are being conducted by the USAF Air Technical Intelligence Center [redacted]

[redacted] It is hoped that a more precise estimate can be made later when these studies have been completed.

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